

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A digital contents license and privilege management method for managing licenses and privileges granted for digital contents to users, comprising the steps of:

registering licenses for digital contents requested to be purchased by each user;

registering association of said registered licenses with each user in a database;

storing the digital contents having said registered licenses and information concerning said licenses;

deleting a license corresponding to a license return request from said database when receiving the license return request to return a license granted for digital contents selected from said stored digital contents by a user;

specifying a user corresponding to said deleted license; and

performing management while associating said specified user with contents of said deleted license or with a privilege corresponding to said license return request.

2. A digital contents license and privilege management method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

processing said request to return a license granted for digital contents as collection or purchase

of said license; and

storing information concerning collection or purchase of said license in said database while associating said information with a user corresponding to said license designated by said license return request.

3. A digital contents license and privilege management method according to Claim 2, further comprising the step of storing a privilege corresponding to said license return request while associating said privilege with said information concerning collection or purchase of said license.

4. A digital contents license and privilege management method according to Claim 1, wherein said privilege corresponding to said license return request is version upgrade of digital contents corresponding to said deleted license.

5. A digital contents license and privilege management method according to Claim 1, wherein said privilege is points that can be used for purchase of digital contents.

6. A digital contents management apparatus for managing information concerning licenses of purchased digital contents, comprising:

a digital contents management database for storing purchase information of said purchased digital contents;

a license management database for storing

license information of said purchased digital contents;

a contents management processing portion for acquiring attribute information of digital contents held by a user from said digital contents management database and said license management database on the basis of user identification information of the user sending a license return request when receiving the license return request to return the license granted for digital contents stored in said digital contents management database; and

a license management processing portion for deleting said license information concerning said deleted license from said license management database on the basis of information of completion of the deletion of said license designated by said license return request;

wherein said contents management processing portion performs management so that digital contents corresponding to said deleted license are deleted in accordance with the information of completion of the deletion of said license designated by said license return request, and that an identification number of the user sending said license return request is associated with a privilege granted to the user in accordance with the return of said license.

7. A recording medium for storing a program that can be read by a computer in a digital contents license management system for managing licenses granted for

digital contents to users, said program including the steps of:

registering a license for digital contents requested to be purchased by a user;

storing association of said registered license with said user in a database;

storing the digital contents having said license registered and information concerning said license;

deleting a license corresponding to a license return request from said database when receiving the license return request to return a license granted for digital contents designated by a user in said stored digital contents;

specifying a user corresponding to said deleted license; and

performing management while associating said specified user with contents of said deleted license or with a privilege corresponding to said license return request.

8. A digital contents management apparatus according to Claim 6, further comprising a user management database for managing identification information of the user, the license corresponding to the user and the privilege granted to the user while associating the identification information, the license and the privilege with one another.

9. A digital contents management apparatus

according to Claim 6, wherein said privilege is points that can be used for purchase of digital contents.

10. A digital contents management apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said privilege is version upgrade of digital contents.

11. A digital contents license and privilege management system for managing licenses and privileges granted for digital contents to users, comprising:

- a contents storage device for storing information for indicating correspondence between a license for digital contents designated by a purchase request and a user obtaining said license and information concerning said license of said digital contents;

- a license management device for deleting a license corresponding to a license return request from a database when receiving the license return request to return a license granted for digital contents designated by a user in digital contents stored in said contents storage device; and

- a contents management device for performing management so that the user corresponding to the deleted license is associated with contents of said deleted license or with a privilege granted to the user in accordance with said license return request.

12. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 11, wherein:

- said license return request to return a

license granted for digital contents is for collection or purchase of said license; and

said contents management device stores information concerning collection or purchase of said license while said information is associated with a user corresponding to said license designated by said license return request.

13. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 12, wherein said contents management device stores a privilege corresponding to said license return request while said privilege is associated with said information concerning collection or purchase of said license.

14. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 11, wherein said privilege corresponding to said license return request is version upgrade of digital contents corresponding to said deleted license.

15. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 11, wherein said privilege is points that can be used for purchase of digital contents.

16. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 12, wherein said contents management device stores information concerning collection or purchase of said license on the basis of transaction information of said license stored in said contents storage device.

17. A digital contents license and privilege management system according to Claim 12, wherein said contents management device sends information concerning the status of digital contents designated by said license return request and a privilege corresponding to said license return request to an external device.

18. A computer program executed in a digital contents license and privilege management system for managing licenses and privileges granted for digital contents to users, comprising the steps of:

registering correspondence between a license registered for digital contents designated by a purchase request and a user obtaining said license;

storing the digital contents having said license registered and information concerning said license;

deleting a license corresponding to a license return request when receiving the license return request to return a license granted for digital contents designated by a user in said stored digital contents;

specifying a user corresponding to said deleted license; and

performing management while associating said specified user with contents of said deleted license or with a privilege corresponding to said license return request.

19. A computer program according to Claim 18,

wherein:

said license return request is for collection or purchase of said license; and

said computer program further comprises the step of storing information concerning collection or purchase of said license while associating said information with a user corresponding to said license designated by said license return request.

20. A computer program according to Claim 19, further comprising the step of storing a privilege corresponding to said license return request while associating said privilege with said information concerning collection or purchase of said license.